

**VETERANS BENEFITS AWARENESS TASK FORCE**  
**VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER MEETING**  
**Monday, March 18, 2002— 1:00 PM**  
**Springfield/Branson Regional Airport**  
**Intermodal Facility Conference Room, Springfield, MO**

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In attendance: **Lt. Governor Joe Maxwell**, State of Missouri; **Jill Talken**, Executive Secretary, Missouri Veterans Commission; **Ronald Taylor**, Associate Director, Missouri Veterans Commission; **Ralph Durnbaugh**, Director Veterans Benefit Awareness, Missouri Veterans Commission; **Bernadette Miller**, Commissioner, Missouri Veterans Commission; **Joseph Mossey**, Lt. Governor's Office; **Clayton Cooper**, **Chester Steffen**, **Dennis Nolte**, **Robert Haney**, **John Marshall**, **Joe Dailey**, **Carol Janeene Pierce**, **David Lexa**, **Tracey Harper**, Veterans Service Officers, Missouri Veterans Commission; **Mike Robbins**, Director Springfield Cemetery, Missouri Veterans Commission; **Chuck Wooten**, Cemetery Program Representative, Missouri Veterans Commission

- I. **Opening Remarks** – Ronald Taylor, Associate Director opened the meeting by explaining to the attendees the Veterans Benefit Task Force purpose and direction. Missouri is ranked 44<sup>th</sup> in compensation benefits and 22<sup>nd</sup> in pension benefits. During a Joint Veterans Affairs Committee meeting last year, Lt. Governor Maxwell offered assistance and committed to the Veterans Commission in joining efforts to raise veteran benefits awareness. This is an enormous opportunity for the Commission to reach a large number of veterans who may qualify to receive VA benefits.
- II. **Task Force Mission** - Joe Maxwell, Lt. Governor, State of Missouri, thanked attendees for coming and expressed his appreciation for the work the Veterans Service Officers do to provide service to the veterans of the state of Missouri and his satisfaction with the action plan the task force has taken. The Lt. Governor heads 15 Boards and Commissions. He serves as Chair of the Senior Rx Program within the Office of Advocacy and Assistance for the Elderly, Advisor for Early Childhood Programs, Chairman Veterans Benefits Awareness Task Force and Advisor for Special Health, Psychological, and Social Needs of Older Minority Individuals Commission. Lt. Governor Maxwell's two priorities are to raise awareness of possible VA benefits and to increase Veterans Service Officers workload. The task forces mission is communicating, setting deadlines, and taking action. The task force will raise awareness about programs that already exists. He stated the need of commitment from Veterans Service Officers to make the mission succeed. "Our Veterans deserve the benefits they earned", commented the Lt. Governor. The Veterans Benefits Awareness Task Force is not creating a new program nor do we want to raise false expectations. There are \$335 million dollars worth of VA benefits to distribute and our task is to get the veterans the benefits they earned. The purpose today is to consolidate and coordinate the workflow process and develop a system. Lt. Governor Maxwell asked the officers how can the task force help them in their jobs and what they will need to assist them in the increase workload the task force will be producing. Without the commitment of the Veteran Service Officers this mission will fail. It is important to work together to complete the task.
- III. **Update-** Ron Taylor
  - a.) The task force is looking for resources for money to help pay for paid ads to help on promotional items to increase awareness. VA statistics indicate the average amount paid in VA benefits per veteran is \$1,267.00 per year in Southeast MO. The average amount paid in VA benefits per veterans in suburbs of St. Louis is \$402.00 per year. The lower per year is where we need to target awareness. We need Veteran Service Officers to help identify key people and areas that we need to try and reach. We

think that one of collateral benefit of raising awareness of all the money that you can bring into the state and showing that we are doing it, we should get a more sympathetic hearing from legislators. We will meet with the legislators to explain what the task force is doing.

- b.) Do cooperative efforts with the Senior Rx Program. The Senior Rx Program will be bringing in seniors and we will be sharing methods and participating in Health fairs that the Senior Rx Program will promote.
- c.) In addition the task force will be conducting Veteran Benefits Supermarkets throughout the state. Supermarkets have been used in other states and proven to be successful. The task force will try to have 10 Supermarkets within the next year. Commitment already are for 3 in St. Louis area and some out state. Community involvement is needed.
- d.) State Fair the Commission will set up a booth to promote veteran benefits and have officer onsite.
- e.) Participate in Veterans Week in Branson, MO
- f.) Partnership with Service Organizations (VFW, American Legion, DAV) in assisting with CBOC's.
- g.) Looking at toll free number and voice activated call forward system to handle increase in phone calls. Expectations of 15,000 to 16,000 phone calls after program roll out.
- h.) The Commission is developing a Foundation for large sums of money donated from corporations to help fund program.

Lt. Governor Maxwell informed the officers the Senior Rx Program application forms include questions pertaining to veterans.

- 1. Are you a veteran?
- 2. Are you receiving Veteran benefits?
- 3. Health cost? Income?

Enrollment period for Senior Rx Program is April 1 to May 30. If 65<sup>th</sup> birthday is within that year, enrollment period will be January 1 to February 28 each year. Eligibility requirements will be based on age and income. The program is planning health fairs with on site screening. The Program will be sharing data with the Commission. Information will be provided to the Veteran Service Officers on the Senior Rx Program.

#### **IV. Question and Concerns**

Joplin, MO conducts "Senior Citizen Day" at the mall. Possible chance for MVC to promote Veterans Benefits Awareness.

VA CAPS System would like for the Veteran Service Officers to have access to the system to check status on claims.

Web page design to include benefits information along with Veterans Service Officers schedules and telephone numbers.

Check nursing homes for veterans that may qualify for benefits. The Lt. Governor's office along with Task Force will work in identifying these veterans.

Power of Attorney limits access to Veterans Service officers if the Commission is not listed on POA. Access to the VA system would help to check status updates on claims. Commission will meet with St. Louis Regional VA office to determine whether the officers could have authority to access information on the system.

Request for OA Rules to accept one letter from VA varifying veterans' income per year for property tax credit.  
Also this should include 10 point preference credit when veteran is applying for state merit positions. LT. Governor Maxwell indicated he would meet with state in reference to this issue.